

June 2, 2005

PRESENT: Dr. Charles W. Curry, Chairman
Charles C. Schooley, Vice Chairman
Kitra A. Shiflett
Betty Jo Hamilton
William Bashaw
Garland Martin
Clay Hewitt
Larry C. Howdyshell
Larry Shiflett
Bruce M. Bowman
Dale L. Cobb
Beatrice B. Cardellicchio

OTHERS PRESENT: David Beyeler
Kay Frye
Tracy Pyles
Nancy Sorrells
Rick Shiflett, Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development
Kathy Holm, Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development

ABSENT: Mark Grove

VIRGINIA: Meeting of the Agricultural Task Force Committee held on Thursday, June 2, 2005,
at 7:00 P.M., in the County Government Center, Verona, Virginia.

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Chairman Curry asked if there was a motion or any changes to the minutes of the May 19, 2005 meeting?

Mr. Bashaw stated that he would like to make a change on page four. He stated that he was asking how many farmers were living on that \$50,000 income?

Chairman Curry asked if there were any changes or a motion to approve the minutes as revised?

Mr. Bowman moved that the minutes be approved as revised.

Ms. Shiflett seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Chairman Curry stated that staff was able to get us a suggestion box. He stated that he would read all of the items out of that box at every meeting.

Chairman Curry stated that Rick Shiflett from the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council is here to speak about funds that this committee could use.

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Mr. Shiflet stated that this committee is here to help keep agriculture strong. He stated that the committee has a \$3,750 grant that they could use to pay for educational programs like PDRs and to find ways to explore other alternatives that may work. He stated that he is grateful that the Board of Supervisors put money aside for PDRs. He stated that Augusta County is taking a step forward by starting this committee to try and keep agriculture in the county.

Kathy Holm stated that she works in the USDA office. She stated that the committee could use these funds to go out and explore options. She stated that whether it be for a field trip to Virginia Beach or using it for resources that the committee needs. She stated that the committee could use the funds to pay for people to come in and speak. She stated that she hopes the committee uses the funds available to them.

Chairman Curry read the items on the agreement. They are as follows:

- Provide the Shenandoah RC&D Council with a copy of any receipts related to field trips, workshops attended, invited speakers, purchased reports, books or other materials it uses as a resource and wants reimbursement or advance payment for;
- Provide a brief report on the task force's findings, educational experiences and resources (no more than two pages) by October 1, 2005, for use by the Shenandoah RC&D Council in reporting back to the Fund;
- Appropriately credit the Shenandoah RC&D Council for its donation to the Task Force Committee with acknowledgement at workshops and/or in press releases and news articles relating to the Task Force Committee's work as appropriate;
- Not expend these funds for any other purpose.

Ms. Hamilton asked how these funds came about?

Mr. Shiflet stated that Bobby Whitescarver, John Eckman from the Valley Conservation Council, and Nancy Sorrells.

Mr. Hamilton asked if the county had the funds for this?

Mr. Howdysheill stated no. He stated that the Board of Supervisors just had staff to collect data.

Mr. Hamilton stated that she appreciates the funds but she wanted to know if this committee could make their recommendation to the Board of Supervisors first and then accept the money just for appearance sake.

Mr. Shiflet stated that the funds are on a reimbursement schedule. He stated that the committee does not have to bill us if they do not want to.

Kathy Holm stated that they mentioned the idea of PDRs but if that does not come up on this committee's agenda that is fine. She stated that their agenda is to keep agriculture strong in the county. She stated that these funds are to help get the resources the committee needs.

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Mr. Cobb stated that the only expenses so far were the suggestion box and Sandi Scannelli which cost \$400-\$500. He stated that Dr. Kohl will charge anywhere from \$2,000-\$2,500. He stated that Mr. Coffield would be bringing that request up to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Bashaw asked if this was a sponsored agreement or private?

Kathy Holm stated private.

Mr. Bashaw asked where the money came from?

Kathy Holm stated that the money came from a private foundation. She stated that the money came from someone who has an interest in agriculture.

Mr. Bowman stated that he has no problems crediting the organization at the appropriate time. He stated that would be after the committee has made their recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Curry asked if there were any other concerns or is there a motion?

Mr. Howdysheill asked if October 1st would be enough time to give them the findings?

Kathy Holm stated that the committee should have something to them by then even if it is not complete.

Mr. Bowman moved that the committee accept the funds and approve the document.

Vice Chairman Schooley seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Mr. Shiflet stated that he needed Chairman Curry to sign the document accepting the funds. He stated that he would also give Chairman Curry a list of resources that the committee could use.

Chairman Curry stated that he appreciated the funds. He stated that the next item on the agenda is for Tracy Pyles to speak on PDRs. He stated that the committee has not decided yet on a strategy. He stated that the committee will rank items on the strategy list tonight.

Mr. Pyles stated that at the Board of Supervisors meeting PDRs were never discussed. He stated that the money was put into a PDR program but it is not the best way to spend it. He stated that Augusta County is the 14th most populated in the state. He stated that the growth rate is .7% a year. He stated that he got this information from the Weldon Cooper Center. He stated that this county is growing substantially but the school population has not been growing substantially. He stated that the birth rate in 1984 was 676 and in 1986 it was 580. He stated that there has not been a substantial amount of increase in births. He stated that the number of people using the county water system has gone up from 3,835 to 13,803. He stated the school population in 1973 was 11,969 and this year there was 10,743 children. He stated that in Buffalo Gap there were 1,000 children but this year there was only 600 children. He stated that the School Board predicts that there will be approximately 10,600 children next school year. He stated that all schools but

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two last year lost enrollment. He stated that Clymore is up 12% because of the Harshbarger subdivision. He stated that in Churchville the school is at a 58% capacity and North River they are at a 63% capacity. He stated that because there is not a lot of growth in his district.

Mr. Pyles showed the committee a spreadsheet that has tax rate information for counties in Virginia. He stated that Loudon County is the fastest growing county in Virginia. He stated that they have a high tax rate but more people are going there. He stated that people are looking at the services that each county provides. He stated that Halifax County is not very populated.

Ms. Shiflett asked if Mr. Pyles was stating that higher taxes cause growth?

Mr. Pyles stated that Halifax County has the lowest tax rate as well as a low growth rate.

Mr. Howdyshell stated that when you have more people there will be more services.

Mr. Pyles stated that people want services such as transportation, etc.

Chairman Curry stated that it would be interesting to know the amount of people that do not have children?

Mr. Pyles stated that there are 10,600 plus/minus children for the 67,000 living in the county. He stated that the number of houses in the county has gone up but the number of children is not up.

Mr. Pyles stated that Jean Shrewsbury gave him the figures for the taxes.

Mr. Pyles stated that some of the issues with PDRs are:

1. Too much land to buy
2. Makes surrounding property more marketable for development
3. Does not preserve farming, only denies certain types of development
4. Will not impact taxes except to increase for the foreseeable future
5. Public notice of the efforts to "preserve" may bring people in
6. Conflicts between farming and conservation among adjoining property owners
7. Could guess wrong where to buy
8. Political climate can kill the program at any time
9. Public is purchasing something they could not use

Mr. Pyles stated that some other thoughts could be to decrease taxes and get rid of taxes for land use but have a larger rollback. He stated that there could be broader tax decreased for buildings

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in land use. He stated that there could be agricultural protection such as with coyotes, disease, and Bio-Terrorism. He stated that the county could participate with income tax. He stated that another option might be TDRs which is the transfer of development rights.

Mr. Pyles stated that PDRs might not be the solution for Augusta County. He stated that a farm community is not solid on PDRs. He stated that he would prefer to reduce the tax rate on farming all together. He stated that he supports farming but not more taxes.

Mr. Bashaw stated that farmers should not pay taxes unless they happen to develop the land. He stated then they should pay the back taxes.

Mr. Pyles stated that there would be a rollback. He stated that he is leaving this information with the committee to make their recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Hewitt stated that a lot of land is going into conservation easements and should not be tax exempt.

Mr. Pyles stated that it may not qualify for land use. He stated that right now they have the money to get rid of taxes and that he believes that is the right way to go.

Mr. Hewitt stated that is a good way to do it.

Mr. Howdysheill stated that with conservation easements you are not protecting everything. He stated that losing thousands of acres and land is not doing agriculture a bit of good.

Ms. Hamilton stated that she appreciates Mr. Pyles' comments. She stated that cutting taxes may not be the best idea in the world. She stated that the committee still has many ideas to explore.

Mr. Shiflett stated that lowering taxes is doable. He stated that farmers do not benefit when realtors work with Community Development.

Ms. Hamilton stated that it is the farmers that take their farms out of agriculture. She stated that why would a farm put land in a conservation easement when they could not use it. She stated that land is at a premium.

Mr. Shiflett stated that he has 146 acres and contacted the Valley Conservation Council on getting a conservation easement on the farm but they do not want anything to do with him.

Chairman Curry asked if there were any questions for Mr. Pyles?

There being none, Chairman Curry thanked Mr. Pyles for speaking to the committee.

Chairman Curry stated that the next item on the agenda was for the committee to rank the Strategies and Tools (Ideas) For County To Preserve and Promote Agriculture. Chairman Curry asked if staff could give each of the committee members' six dots instead of the five dots.

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Chairman Curry asked if there was anything else to add to the list?

Ms. Hamilton added explore agricultural tourism to the list.

Chairman Curry added explore agricultural enterprise zones.

Ms. Hamilton asked if the brochures were to educate the public in a specific area?

Chairman Curry stated that the brochures would be for new homeowners.

Chairman Curry stated the committee should rank all of the items.

After they were ranked, Mr. Cobb read the priority items. They are: 1. Concentrating Development, 2. Sliding scale for land use tax, 3. PDR/TDR, 4. Explore agricultural enterprise zones.

Mr. Cobb asked if the committee wanted to set the meetings in order of the rankings?

Chairman Curry stated the four dot items sooner than later.

Ms. Shiflett stated that the Comprehensive Plan only received two dots but she would encourage the committee members as well as the public attendance on the Steering Committee meetings on the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that it is important as to what happens within the next twenty years.

Chairman Curry stated that the next item on the agenda is the Loss of Productive Agricultural Land and Rapid Subdivision of Exclusive Agriculture Land.

Mr. Cobb stated that this map shows agriculture land broken down between General Agriculture and Exclusive Agriculture. He stated that the green is General Agriculture and the blue is Exclusive Agriculture. He stated that 93.7% of land in Augusta County is zoned within those two agricultural zonings. He stated that there are 21,000 parcels zoned General Agriculture and 4,058 parcels zoned Exclusive Agriculture. He stated that each committee member should have received a packet of information which he will be going over. He stated that staff pulled all of the subdivision files and he has data going back ten years. He stated that page one deals with new agriculture lots. He stated that there are over 1,000 acres a year created at an average of 2.8 acres per lot. He stated that in the last ten years in General Agriculture there are 1,377 lots created which total about 8,000 acres. He stated that in that same amount of time in Exclusive Agriculture there were 335 lots created totaling 3,000 acres. He stated that under Family Member Exception there were 757 lots created under this exception in the past ten years. He stated that 44% of the lots are being created this way. He stated that on page two shows the average acreage of all new lots which are 2.8 acres median and 6.399 mean. He stated that on page three shows the number of new lots created in agriculture. He stated that page four shows the acres of all new agriculture lots. He stated that page five deals with Family Member Exception. In the last ten years, 300 lots were given to the spouse which is

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39% of all Family Member Exception lots. He stated that ten years later about half of the property is still in the same property owners' name.

Mr. Bashaw stated that the other half was created to deceive and sell the property.

Mr. Cobb indicated the other half had been transferred into another name.

Mr. Cobb stated that there were 1,045 Boundary Line Adjustments. He stated that these are hard to track.

Ms. Hamilton stated that using Boundary Line Adjustments is another loophole with subdividing property.

Mr. Cobb stated that on page eight it shows that 3,469 acres of agricultural land was rezoned in the last ten years.

Mr. Cobb stated that to reduce the number of new lots being created this committee could consider some of these ideas:

1. Reduce the number of lots that are permitted to be created per year

Example: You can create one lot per year now and recommend reducing it to one lot every three years

2. Sliding Scale Zoning – This will allow a certain number of lots to be created based on the size of the parcel at time ordinance is created and after that amount is created then no additional lots will be permitted.

Mr. Cobb stated that because there are 25,000 parcels Zoned Agriculture in Augusta County this method could be taken advantage of.

Mr. Cobb stated that the other ideas the committee could take into consideration is:

3. Different regulations for Exclusive Agriculture vs. General Agriculture
4. Different regulations for different soil types
5. Division rights

Example (Rockingham):

A-1: Over 40 Acres – You are allowed to create one new lot every five years and you cannot go below 40 acres. Once you are at or below 40 acres, you cannot subdivide any further, except for family members.

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A-2: Over 6 Acres – You are allowed to create one new lot every three years and you cannot go below six acres. Once you are at or below six acres, you cannot subdivide, except for family members.

Chairman Curry asked staff to include these lists under the recommendation portion of the binder.

Mr. Cobb stated that under Family Member Exception there are a number of items the committee could recommend. They are as follows:

1. Eliminate Spouse From List Of Eligible Grantees
2. Any Lot Created Under Family Member Exception Held For Five Years
3. Eliminate Family Member Exception From Ordinance Totally
4. Require Affidavit
5. Recipient Over 18 Years Of Age

Mr. Cobb stated that with Boundary Line Adjustments the committee could recommend to count them as new lots with exceptions for:

1. Strip of land sold to adjacent property owners that would not allow any additional lots to be created
2. Sell 50 acres to a farmer with intent to be used for farming and not development

Mr. Howdysell indicated the exception should be any lot sold to be farmed not just 50 acres or larger.

Mr. Cobb asked if the committee had any questions?

Chairman Curry stated that these charts and Tracy Pyles report should be placed in the information section for the committee.

Chairman Curry stated that this has been an interesting evening.

Ms. Hamilton stated that she would like Ms. Cardellicchio to copy an article for the committee.

Chairman Curry stated that the next meeting would be June 16, 2005.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Chairman